



A 60-day trial of free parking at the Bethesda library has just ended. The public and Montgomery County officials will now discuss how parking should be handled in the future. - Jay Westcott/Examiner

County officials to decide fate of parking at Bethesda library

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The price — or lack thereof — of parking at Bethesda's public library is being debated.

For years, free parking was the order of the day at the Arlington Road facility. Then, in 1993, meters were added to deter commuters who were not going to the library from parking in library-designated spaces.

Montgomery County Public Information Officer Bonnie Ayers said that period was followed by a 60-day trial period of free parking that just ended.

It's time now for the public and officials with the county's public

works and library departments to sound off on how parking should be handled from now on.

Ayers said county officials want to gauge whether citizens are willing to pay the meters and whether non-library visitors have again abused the system.

"Then they'll take the input and make a decision about whether to reinstate paid parking," she said.

Ayers said Montgomery County's Council members earlier this year voted to put all county libraries on a system of complimentary parking. Bethesda's facility was treated as a separate entity because of its unique situation with commuters.

"They were taking away spots for people actually going to the library," she said. "So by and large, everyone said they were willing to pay to have

a place to park."

In addition to Bethesda, library leaders also are working to come up with a plan for how parking will work once the new, state-of-the-art Rockville library opens next month.

Ayers said that since it's in the middle of an urban renewal area, there won't be a designated lot for just library patrons. Instead they'll park in a lot for Rockville's overall downtown section. Library-goers will either not pay, have a pass validated or do something completely different, depending on what's decided.

The meeting about Bethesda is scheduled for 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Nov. 2 in the meeting room of the library.

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